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Herbs

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DIRECTIONS FOR MAKING HERB PRINTS

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Why make herb prints?

Several of the culinary herbs are low-growing, with small leaves and tiny flowers, and would-be herb gardeners find it hard to fix their characteristics in mind. Speakers find it difficult to describe them in such a way that audiences get a clear idea of them. Illustrations large enough to show to a group are almost impossible to find. Some herb gardeners would like to keep illustrated records of the varieties they grow and use successfully.

Herb prints answer all these needs. They give an excellent idea of the characteristics of the plant, and if carefully made are very artistic. Prints may be made on loose-leaf notebook paper, and notes on growing and using them kept on a page facing the print; they may be made on greeting cards; or they may be mounted in manila folders, which protect them and make them easy to exhibit. Photographed herb prints make good illustrations for books, lantern slides, and bromide enlargements.

Deftness, patience, a bit of artistic judgment, and a few inexpensive materials are all that is needed.

Materials needed for printing with ink.

- Piece of glass about 9 by 12 inches. Ordinary window glass bound with adhesive tape will do. Plate glass with beveled edges is more expensive.
- Tube of printers' ink, black or colored. A 25-cent tube will make a number of prints.
- Photograph roller. The 25-cent size is satisfactory.
- Newspaper or paper towels.
- Bond paper, 9 by 11 inches, white or colored.
- Small scissors.
- Small tweezers.
- India ink and fine drawing pen, desirable for touching up and lettering.
- Herb material:
 - Not-too-large sprays of the herbs to be printed. Material must be fresh, unwilted, and absolutely dry. Avoid if possible sprays with heavy stems or very large blossoms.

How to proceed.

1. Spread a layer of ink evenly on glass with roller. Do not make the layer too thick.

2. Lay the selected spray on the inked plate, with the backs of the leaves down. Spread leaves out so they will be thoroughly coated with ink. Trim off superfluous leaves or blossoms on upper side of stem if they seem likely to confuse the outline. This is important for plants with thick stems and crowded blossoms like sage, or a bushy habit like tarragon.
3. Place over the spray several thicknesses of paper; hold paper in place with left hand and rub it thoroughly but gently with the right, so that the under sides of leaves, stems, and blossoms are thoroughly inked.
4. Lift the inked spray with the tweezers, and lay it carefully in position on the bond paper.
5. Cover the spray with fresh paper and rub as before, being careful to hold the paper firmly over the spray so it will not move.
6. Remove paper and lift up the spray. Be sure to let the print dry thoroughly.
7. Label and indicate whether plant is annual, biennial, or perennial.

A little experience is needed to get superior results, but your very first print, with all its faults, will fascinate you. If ink is spread just right the delicate veins on the backs of the leaves and the characteristic markings on their edges will stand out clearly.

Making Blueprints of Herb Specimens.

Materials needed:

Printing frame of proper size, blueprint paper.
Carefully selected sprays, fresh, unwilted, and perfectly dry.
Small pair of scissors for trimming off excess leaves.

How to proceed:

1. Place spray on glass of printing frame.
2. Lay the blueprint paper over it, close the frame, and print.
3. Wash, dry, and press.
4. Bind or mount.

This is an easy method. Proper trimming and placing of the spray so that the outline is sharp and artistic, and the blossoms really show their structure, is an important step in the process.